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ABSTRACT

During fiscal year 1998, 7 of Ohio's 12 school-to-work regions conducted a needs assessment on equity issues within their regions. The survey instruments were completed by 6,173 students in grades 9-12 (3,316 girls and 2,857 boys). The survey focused on the economics of gender and work, nontraditional careers, and gender and career choices. Only 39% of respondents thought that women must work because of economic need, and only 56% expected to work at a paying job most of their lives. When asked whether jobs traditionally held by men pay better than those traditionally held by women, 41% answered affirmatively, 24% were unsure, and 35% disagreed. Although 59% of respondents were interested in learning about nontraditional careers, 44% still believed that certain jobs are best done by members of one gender. Only about half the respondents would support workers in nontraditional careers, and less than half (48% of males and 41% of females) believed that women are able to choose any career they want or that it is important to increase the number of women in jobs usually held by men. When asked whether mothers with young children should work, 39% said yes and 43% said no. (Contains 22 references.) (MN)

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Equity Issues
Ohio Vocational Sex Equity

Volume 5 Issue 1
Fall 1998

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Ohio Students Speak Out on Equity Issues

Many times educators **think** they know and understand students', parents', and employers' perceptions on various issues only to find out they do not. This past year, The Ohio Department of Education, Vocational Sex Equity offered School-to-Work regions an opportunity to find out what students, teachers, parents, and employers thought about equity issues. In some cases, the information received was right on target with what educators expected; in other cases, it was not.

As part of the "Building an Equitable School-to-Work System Grant," seven of the twelve Ohio School-to-Work regions conducted a needs assessment on equity issues within their regions during FY98. Surveys were to be randomly sent to 1,000 students, 200 teachers, 200 parents, and 100 employers and community organizations to determine local needs. Topics surveyed included: classroom treatment of students; sexual harassment; parent and peer influence on career choices; perceptions of the interrelationship between gender, roles, and career choices; nontraditional careers; and equitable pay issues. Local regions were to take the results of their surveys to develop policies and strategies necessary for achieving equity in school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities.

Vocational Sex Equity has compiled the survey results from the seven School-to-Work regions to try to grasp the breadth and depth of equity issues throughout the state. Of the 6,173 9th through 12th grade students who completed surveys, 3,316 were girls and 2,857 were boys. In addition, 760 teachers, 743 parents, and 230 employers completed surveys.

There are several limitations to the survey. Regions were allowed to modify the survey according to their local needs. If a region wanted to remove a section of the survey (such as sexual harassment), Vocational Sex Equity gave them the flexibility to do so. If questions needed to be modified to meet the local culture, the regions had that option. The respondents were not selected according to a state-wide scientific random sample. Each region determined when and to whom they would conduct the survey. Some regions may have surveyed students in a particular class while other regions may have done a random sampling of a particular grade. Information such as the response rate, conditions under which the survey was conducted (including dates, places, and proctoring of the survey) was not available to Vocational Sex Equity. Responses may not add up to 100 percent, depending on how the regions conducted the survey.

Despite these limitations, the survey results present a snapshot of what Ohio high school students think about equity issues. From how students have responded, we know there are still equity issues to be addressed in our schools, families, and communities. Even though we cannot scientifically conclude significant differences or even compare male and female responses, we can still use this information to examine the status of equity in our schools.

This issue paper presents results from the questions students answered regarding the economics of gender and work, nontraditional careers, and gender, roles, and career choices. In addition, the fact sheets offer recent research, implications, and recommendations for educators regarding the identified equity issues.

Educators and administrators can duplicate and use the fact sheets as catalysts for discussing equity issues with staff, students, parents, and employers. They can incorporate the information into appropriate teaching strategies for the classroom. If they implement the recommendations, they will establish an equitable school and work environment and increase the numbers of females and males enrolled, retained, and placed in high-wage, nontraditional employment.

To conduct the survey in your School-to-Work region, contact Connie Blair, Vocational Equity Supervisor, Division of Vocational and Adult Education, Ohio Department of Education, 65 S. Front St., Columbus, OH 43215-4183. Phone: 614-644-6238

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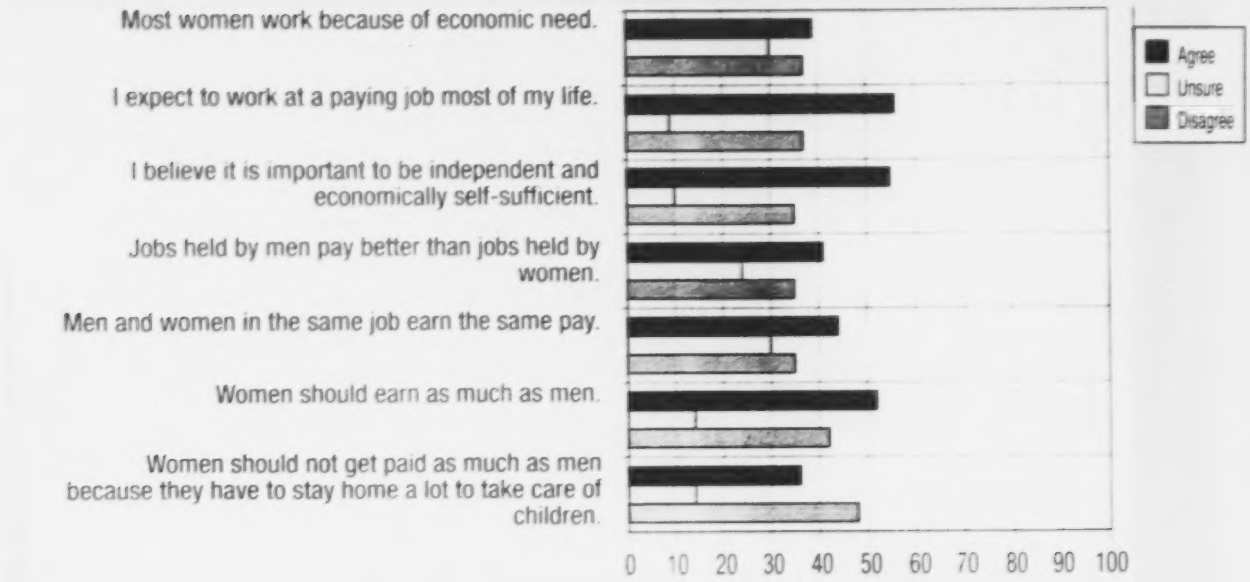
Ohio High School Students Speak Out on. . .

The Economics of Gender and Work


Most women work because of economic need.
I expect to work at a paying job most of my life.
I believe it is important to be independent and economically self-sufficient.
Jobs held by men pay better than jobs held by women.
Men and women in the same job earn the same pay.
Women should earn as much as men.
Women should not get paid as much as men because they have to stay home a lot to take care of children.
Agree
Unsure
Disagree
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Results from an Ohio survey of 6,173 students in grades 9-12 in 7 School-to-Work regions.

Economic Need

Only thirty-nine percent of survey respondents thought that most women work because of economic need; 30 percent were unsure; and 37 percent disagreed. It is evident by these figures that students do not understand the reality of the adult world of work. Though the notion persists that women work to supplement a breadwinner's wage or for discretionary income, the reality is that many households are dependent on women's earnings. According to the May 1986 staff study prepared for the Joint Economic Committee, U.S. Congress, 71 percent of mothers who work do so "to support their families," not "for something interesting to do" or "to earn extra money" (U.S. Department of Labor, 1994). For many women, employment is a necessary means of caring for their families. This is especially true for women who are separated, divorced, or widowed, or who head single-parent households. More than one in three women who maintain families work full-time but earn less than poverty level income (Taeuber, 1991). In a nationally representative sample of 1,502 women, 48 percent of the employed women in married couples provide half or more of the family income (Families and Work Institute, 1995). Educators need to

- Educate students, especially females, on the likelihood that they will need to work to care for themselves and/or other family members.
- Help students understand that women who are employed are mainly working due to economic necessity.

Economic Self-Sufficiency

Only 56 percent of respondents agreed that they expected to work at a paying job most of their lives; nine percent were unsure; and 37 percent disagreed. In addition, only 55 percent of respondents agreed, 10 percent were unsure, and 35 percent disagreed that it is important to be independent and economically self-sufficient. Once again, students do

continued

not have an accurate view of the adult world. It is disheartening to think that almost half of the respondents do not expect to work or to be independent and economically self-sufficient. One wonders how they will provide for themselves and other family members throughout their adult lives. On average, women work 30 years and men work more years than women. Of those women who do leave work to have children, more than half return to the labor force when the child is one year old or younger (WOW, 1998). By the time the youngest child is three years old, at least six out of every ten mothers have entered or returned to the labor force (WOW, 1998). Yet, having a job does not guarantee independence and economic self-sufficiency. In 1995, thirty percent of working people earned below-poverty wages—23 percent of men and 37 percent of women (O'Hare, 1996). Of the top 20 jobs for women in Ohio (in terms of greatest numbers employed), only three are occupations that pay enough to support a family—elementary school teachers, LPNs and registered nurses (Gove & Thompson, 1995). Educators need to

- Educate students, especially females, on the likelihood that they will work the majority of their adult lives.
- Give students accurate earnings data and encourage students to make informed, realistic choices about their potential earnings for any given occupation and its effect upon their standard of living.
- Encourage students to explore occupations that will enable them to be economically self-sufficient, especially nontraditional, high-wage careers.

Wage Disparity

Forty-one percent of survey respondents agree, 24 percent are unsure, and 35 percent disagree that jobs held by men pay better than jobs held by women. Forty-four percent agree that men and women in the same job earn the same pay compared to 30 percent who are unsure and 35 percent who disagree. A higher percentage (52%) of respondents agree that women should earn as much as men compared to 14 percent who are unsure and 42 percent who disagree. Thirty-six percent of respondents agreed, 14 percent were unsure, and 48 percent disagreed that women should not get paid as much as men because they have to stay home a lot to take care of children. In essence, the majority of students do not understand the reality of wage disparity, what that means over a lifetime, and the concept of receiving equal pay for equal work regardless of gender. In 1997, full-time women workers averaged 74.4 percent of men's weekly earnings (Hartmann & Whittaker, 1998). For women of color, the gap was even wider. Black women earned 63 percent and Hispanic women, 53 percent, of white men's weekly earnings (U.S. DOL, 1997). Women earn less than men in 97 percent of all occupations for which detailed information by gender is available (U.S. DOL, 1997). The average 25-year-old woman who works full-time year round for 40 years will earn $523,000 less than the average 25-year-old man if current wage patterns continue (Hartmann & Whittaker, 1998). Even though women enter and exit the workforce more frequently due to childbearing and rearing years, their time out of the workforce is limited, not greatly reducing their skills or knowledge in their occupation. Educators need to

- Challenge students on their assumptions regarding equal pay for equal work.
- Instruct students in how to negotiate wages in the interview and hiring process to reduce and/or eliminate potential wage disparity.
- Not tolerate wage disparity based solely on gender when placing students in paid work experiences.
- Encourage students to identify average earnings in various occupations, comparing gender earnings data when available.
- Provide students with information on careers within industries so that the students can see the multiple opportunities from entry level to technical and professional levels.

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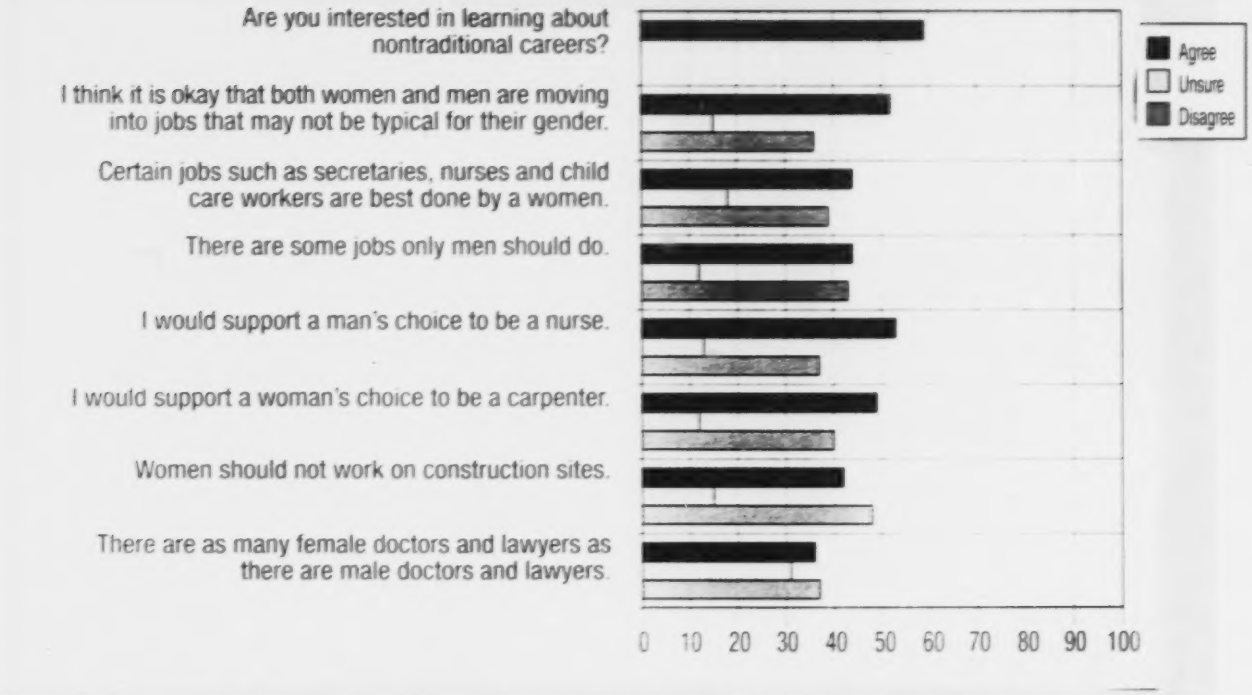
Excerpted from *Equity Issues*, Vol. 5 Issue 1, Fall 1998. For further information contact Vocational Sex Equity, Vocational and Adult Education, Ohio Department of Education, 65 S. Front St., Columbus, OH 43215, (614) 644-6238

Ohio High School Students Speak Out on. . .

Nontraditional Careers


Are you interested in learning about nontraditional careers?
I think it is okay that both women and men are moving into jobs that may not be typical for their gender.
Certain jobs such as secretaries, nurses and child care workers are best done by a women.
There are some jobs only men should do.
I would support a man's choice to be a nurse.
I would support a woman's choice to be a carpenter.
Women should not work on construction sites.
There are as many female doctors and lawyers as there are male doctors and lawyers.
Agree
Unsure
Disagree
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Results from a nonscientific survey of 6,173 Ohio students in grades 9-12 in 7 School-to-Work regions.

Interest in Nontraditional Careers

Fifty-nine percent of students are interested in learning about nontraditional careers. Research shows that females tend to aspire to nontraditional careers more than males, especially in the professions. Of the high school graduates in the 1992 Follow-Up Study to the 1988 National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), 68.8 percent of females said they expected to be working in the professions by the time they were 30 years old, compared with 48.8 percent of males. Considering that 48 percent of all workers in the professions are already women and that only 20 percent of all occupations require a college degree, it is clear that the demand for professional personnel will never be large enough to accommodate the 68.8 percent of women high school graduates who say they want to enter professional careers (Gray, 1995).

Although females are choosing nontraditional professional careers, they are still not considering nontraditional careers in the second highest earnings category of craft, precision metal, and specialized repair. Only 0.4 percent of females expected to be working in precision metal/crafts/specialized repair occupations, and only 3.7 percent expected to be working as technicians (Gray, 1995). Educators need to

- Instruct students in the availability and future growth of jobs, including nontraditional occupations.
- Encourage students to consider high-wage, high-tech careers that include both technical and professional opportunities.

continued

Gendered Expectations

Even though 52 percent of survey respondents agree that it is okay that both women and men are moving into jobs that may not be typical for their gender, 44 percent of respondents still believe that certain jobs are best done by women and some jobs should only be done by men. Research indicates that men and women still tend to choose traditional jobs for their gender. Males still choose jobs requiring physical strength, mathematical ability, and analytical skills while females tend to choose jobs that are nurturing, service-oriented, and involve relationships. The fact is males and females have all of these characteristics (some more than others), but these traits are not necessarily based on gender. Girls typically explore careers from a narrower set of career options than do boys (Farmer, 1995). Educators need to help students

- Expand their thinking on viable career options.
- Identify underlying attitudes regarding appropriate career choices and dispel stereotypical myths.

Support for Nontraditional Careers

While 49 percent of respondents would support a woman's choice to be a carpenter, 42 percent of respondents believe women should not work on construction sites. Fifty-three percent of respondents would support a man's choice to be a nurse. Even though these percentages show almost half of the respondents would support workers in nontraditional jobs, that also means at least half would not. While the vast majority of job requirements are unrelated to sex (WOW, 1998), attitudes about which jobs are appropriate for men and women persist.

In spite of traditional attitudes regarding gender and career choices, the numbers of men and women choosing nontraditional jobs are increasing. Nationally, 6.5 percent of registered nurses and 10.6 percent of nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants in 1997 were males (U.S. DOL,1997a). In Ohio's vocational programs, males comprised 8.1 percent of the secondary students and 7.2 percent of the adult students enrolled in practical nursing during FY97 (ODE, 1998). Females comprised 3.4 percent of the secondary students and 13.6 percent of the adult students enrolled in carpentry in FY97 (ODE, 1998), while nationally, females comprised 2.7 percent of workers in construction trades in 1997 (U.S. DOL, 1997b).

Women have made great strides in the professions. In 1997, 26 percent of physicians were females and 27 percent of lawyers were females (U.S. DOL, 1997c). Even though females comprise over 25 percent of lawyers and doctors (less than 25% indicates the occupation is nontraditional for that gender), females still have a long way to go to be equitably represented in those careers. Students choosing nontraditional careers must overcome stereotypes of appropriate jobs for their gender, lack of support by peers and coworkers, potential harassment issues, and questions regarding strength, abilities, and personal characteristics perceived as needed for the job. Educators need to encourage students to

- Explore the realities of nontraditional occupations—abilities required, job satisfaction, physical and social work environment, and earnings.
- Eliminate sex stereotypes of jobs for males and females and focus on selecting careers according to interests, skills, and abilities.
- Analyze their views about nontraditional careers, especially high-wage, high-tech careers.

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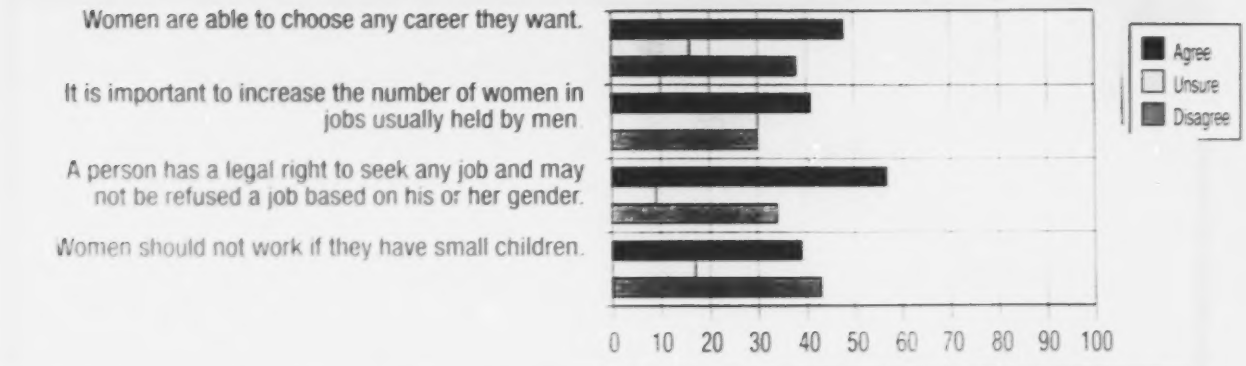
Gender, Roles, and Career Choices


Women are able to choose any career they want.
It is important to increase the number of women in jobs usually held by men.
A person has a legal right to seek any job and may not be refused a job based on his or her gender.
Women should not work if they have small children.
Agree
Unsure
Disagree
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Results from an unscientific survey of 6,173 Ohio students in grades 9-12 in 7 School-to-Work regions.

Gender and Career Choices

Less than half of the respondents (48% and 41% respectively) agree that women are able to choose any career they want or that it is important to increase the number of women in jobs usually held by men. Students appear to adhere to traditional social beliefs regarding appropriate career choices for their gender. In 1992, only 6.6 percent of all working women were employed in nontraditional occupations, that is jobs in which 75 percent or more of those employed are men (WOW, 1990). Yet, women in nontraditional jobs earn 20 percent to 30 percent more than women in traditional occupations (WOW, 1993). Most students aspire to careers in the professions (accountants, educators, physicians, lawyers, engineers, etc.). No other career choices are even close (See Table 1). Few expect to work as technicians (8.4 % males and 3.7% females); fewer still in skilled crafts (5.3% males and 0.3% females). Yet, careers in technical fields and skilled crafts pay well, have many job openings, and are expected to grow. By choosing careers in these areas, all students can become more economically self-sufficient. Instead, many women choose traditional jobs. The top 20 jobs for women in Ohio (in terms of greatest numbers employed) are concentrated in clerical, health, retail and service occupations such as childcare and housekeeping services. Only three of the top 20 (elementary school teachers, LPNs and registered nurses) are occupations that pay enough to support a family (Gove & Thompson, 1995). Educators need to

- Challenge students to assess their beliefs and mores regarding gender-appropriate roles in careers.
- Provide opportunities for students to explore a wide variety of career choices, including nontraditional occupations.

Job Discrimination

Fifty-seven percent of survey respondents agree, 34 percent disagree, and nine percent are unsure that a person has a legal right to seek any job and may not be refused a job based on his or her gender. Under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, employers (including school districts) with over 15 or more employees, labor organizations, and employment agencies are prohibited from discrimination based on sex, race, color, religion, or national origin in all aspects of employment. The law protects employees and students participating in employment programs. Educators must

- Inform students, staff, and employers about federal laws regarding nondiscriminatory employment, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- Teach students how to handle potential discrimination in the interview and hiring process.
- Educate employers of students about Title VII and its implications for employers and schools.

continued

Table 1. **Percentage of High School Seniors in 1992 Who Expected to Be Employed in Various Occupations, by Gender**

Occupation	All Seniors	Males	Females
Clerical	3.5	1.2	5.7
Craftperson/Trade	2.8	5.3	0.3
Farming	1.0	1.6	0.4
Homemaker	1.2	0.1	2.2
Laborer	0.8	1.4	0.1
Manager	6.0	6.6	5.4
Military	3.2	5.6	0.8
Operative	1.2	2.1	0.2
Professional	59.0	49.3	68.8
Proprietor	6.7	8.7	4.8
Protective Services	4.1	6.9	1.4
Sales	1.9	2.3	1.5
Service	2.6	0.6	4.6
Technical	6.0	8.4	3.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources as cited in Gray & Herr, 1995, p. 9: Data compiled from *National Educational Longitudinal Study, 1988, 1992 Second Follow-Up*, by the National Center for Educational Statistics, 1992, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Working Mothers with Young Children

Thirty-nine percent of respondents agree, 43 percent disagree, and 17 percent are unsure that women should not work if they have small children. As these percentages demonstrate, American society has not come to consensus on this value-laden issue of women with small children being in the labor force. This issue is more than economic; it entails many value-driven decisions. However, the fact remains that six out of every 10 mothers of children under age 6 are in the labor force (U.S. DOL, 1997). Approximately 80 percent of working women become pregnant during their lives, and over half return to work within a year of childbirth (Sachs, 1994). Most women return to work full-time (U.S. DOL, 1994). Educators need to

- Challenge students in their traditional assumptions of mothers working in the home and fathers working out of the home.
- Teach students to critically think through decisions, taking facts and values into account.
- Instruct all students in balancing work and family.
- Help students understand the costs and benefits of working versus staying at home with children.
- Encourage students to research family-friendly work policies, flexible working hours, etc.

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Ask yourself these questions as you review the enclosed information:

How does this data compare with what we **think** our students think?

What should we do about finding out what our students think about equity issues?

How can we make sure we are addressing equity issues in grades K-12?

How should this information

- Affect how our staff plans for professional development?
- Alter how we prepare students for the workforce?
- Influence how we teach employability skills and core competencies?
- Impact how students use Individualized Career Plans and Career Passports?

How do we change what we are doing so

- Students consider appropriate career choices that provide living wages and use their talents and abilities?
- Students look at careers from an industry perspective rather than from a traditional gender-based orientation?
- Staff reduce sex stereotyping in school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities?

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